

BOOK REVIEW

***Development, Displacement and Deprivation* by Prakash Chandra Deogharia. Delhi: Shree Publishers and Distributors. 2012. Pp 256. Hardback. ISBN: 978-81-8329-423-2.**

Prakash Chandra Deogharia's latest endeavour, *Development, Displacement and Deprivation*, is a probing book on the dynamics and economics of the regions affected by mega projects that force people to intra-migration within the country. The author claims that in the long run, it can spell serious trouble for the development template. He adds that only in the recent decades have governments around the world have begun working sincerely on the rehabilitation of the displaced peoples.

The R&R (Resettlement and Rehabilitation) policy requires a genuine understanding of the problems of the displaced people; the author warns that a non-serious approach can lead to grave socio-political consequences including toppling of governments. The formulation of a pro-people policy is an imperative prerequisite towards effective rehabilitation. He also emphasizes the fact that the rehabilitation process is much more than maintaining the standards of living for the PAPs (Project Affected Persons). These should be directed towards an optimal use of their productivity.

Another point highlighted in the study is that the new economic environment of the rehabilitated persons may not have economic indices similar to their past ones and hence, the transition from a barter-exchange-based system to a monetized-marked-based system ought to be smooth and appropriate. They must have enough resources and information so as to inculcate properly the cruxes of the new system. This requires an extra-economic perception of the people and it is important that the socio-cultural uniqueness should be taken into account together with motivation, education, skill development, information and risk-sharing.

Deogharia writes in the preface that '[T]he primary objective of this book is to describe, analyze and appraise displacement and its effects.' For this purpose, the volume has been divided into two parts: the first section deals with the diverse aspects of displacement and rehabilitation; the second takes up the impact of displacement. Ample support to this empirical study is provided by a data-based study of the Subernrekha Multipurpose Project (SMP).

Section A comprises four chapters – 'Introduction', 'Land Acquisition and Involuntary Displacement', 'Development, Displacement and Discontent', and 'Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Project-Affected Families' (PAFs). The Introduction launches the argument that it is generally the backward sections of society that are displaced by the government and private projects that necessitate land acquisition. It not only impinges on them psychologically but also dismantles their traditional production systems. The chapter traces briefly the history of displacement in India, going back to the colonial times. Such displacements have generally taken place due to reservoir formation and mining activities. However, the rehabilitation part has suffered tremendously on account of factors that are most often manageable, and often, beyond control. The factors consist of poor planning, poor data base, insufficient allotment of funds, lack of participation of PAFs and improper R&R policies. It results into a degradation of the eco-systems too, eventually bringing about poverty and deprivation. On the basis of authentic data, Deogharia surmises that development induced development displaces around 10 million people annually around the globe. He also focuses on the woes of the tribal populations of Jharkhand and recounts the awry politics and economics of land acquisition for steel plants, hydel plants, mining etc., causing the displacement of around 1 million people in this state. A key shortcoming in the rehabilitation of PAFs is the faulty land acquisition acts that are full of loopholes. On the converse side, there are resettlement and rehabilitation policies in India but they are not adequate. The positive fallout of a review of these policies has been the Jharkhand policy 2008 which has a proviso

for tribal development and makes periphery development mandatory for all industries being set up in the state by necessitating their spending on the displaced people 1 percent of the net profit annually.

The second chapter in Section A commences with a valid statement that urban expansion is putting vicarious pressures on agricultural land. The contradiction is that while it causes gains to the urban population in terms of diversified livelihoods, higher wages and incomes, rural communities suffer through a corrosion of their micro-environment owing to degradation of basic amenities and pollution. The process ignores the primary stakeholders i. e. the original farmers and landowners. The urban activities that put pressure on agricultural land by dint of the conversion of the nature of land are real estate development, industrial setups and special economic zones. The author also throws light on the two types of land acquisition – direct from seller to investor, and through a process in which the government acts as an intermediary. Land acquisition causes involuntary migration which in turn sets off hidden ecological, social and human expenditure. In Jharkhand, it has given birth to large scale tribal unrest. However, there occurs in the chapter a repetition of the history of land acquisition in Jharkhand, which could have been dealt with in a consolidated manner in any one of the initial chapters. Additional information surfaces in the description of the patterns of land alienation. The author has used nine tables to present a comparative model of the resettlement and rehabilitation policies in different states and the centre.

The third chapter talks about an additional but vital issue – discontent caused by displacement. However, there is a trivial repetition here in tracing the history of displacement in the country and Jharkhand. The impact on the displaced people has come in the form of loss of agricultural land, employment, traditional market and economic links, common resources, forest land and educational opportunities. It has also brought in its wake the breakdown of community and family relations. The disbursement of compensation, on the other hand, has been mired in corruption and controversies. At the end of the chapter there is a very helpful inclusion of the approach of the United Nations on displacement.

‘Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Project-Affected Families’ spells out the basic lacuna of the rehabilitation policies – improper settlement. The World Bank took the first comprehensive step in this direction by adopting a policy in 1990. Its orientation is the minimization of involuntary resettlement, restoration of the people’s former living standards, earning capacity and production levels and a time bound resettlement plan. There should be community participation in planning and implementing resettlement and the integration with the host community should be well orchestrated. The chapter also discusses the policies of the Asian Development Bank and other agencies and confers on the position of marginalized peoples. It closes with a categorical evaluation of the amendments made in the land acquisition policies.

Section B is a micro study of the Subernarekha Multipurpose Project. It estimates its effect on the displaced people through the chapters ‘Displacement and Rehabilitation’; ‘Implementation of Rehabilitation and Resettlement in SMP’; ‘Impact of Displacement on Project Affected Families’ and a comprehensive ‘Conclusion’.

The first chapter in this section provides the proper perspective with a socio-economic profile of West Singhbhum where the SMP is located. It takes in climate and rainfall, demographic uniqueness, economic classification of population, crop pattern, irrigation, land use pattern and the socio-economic attitudes, followed by the objectives and components of the SMP, its projected benefits and the administrative structure.

The second chapter presents a thorough data-based profile of the displaced people by each component of the SMP. The R&R study too is componential. A major limitation in the implementation of the rehabilitation has been the use of faulty data by the implementing agencies which forced the state government to revise the policies, with additional guidelines from the World Bank as it is aided by the organization. The chapter

also discusses constitutional perspectives and identification of displaced persons.

The seventh chapter in the book and third in Section B calculates the economic derivations of resettlement through sample PAFs and the compensation doled out to them, with the help of a number of tables and data columns. The samples have been taken from the eleven sites where the SMP is operative.

The chapter that follows assesses the overall impact of displacement on the project affected families. The sources are by and large primary data. A vital observation is that displacement has changed the nature of the distribution of assets as well as their structure. The study also takes into account the impact on employment, income, consumption, and investment patterns.

The conclusion of the study deliberates both the general observation and those located at the micro level. The general observations are on compensation, access to common property resources and immovable assets, the transition process, employment opportunities and training and the problems at the rehabilitation sites. The observations based on the micro study of the SMP is also revealing in its minuteness. It closes with an important part of any economic study; suggestions – displacement of minimal population, rehabilitation as a national responsibility, humaneness of its character, participatory nature of R&R etc.

At the end of the book there are valuable annexure and a comprehensive bibliography. Altogether, it is a vital book in its entirety and scope of study.

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